

Carry On My Wayward Son by freeminds4all

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Summary: Living in a small town sucks. Everyone may know everyone. But that doesn't mean people are any less divided, less ignorant. How can someone be true to ones self in a place like this. Has characters from Freaks and Geeks. But not a crossover.

1. Chapter 1

Lyssa sat on her door step smoking a cigarette while waiting for her ride. Out of the corner of her eye she saw her neighbor step out of his front door. She turned her head fully to watch Steve walk over to his car. Steve noticed her then and gives her an awkward wave. Lyssa scoffed at the gesture, lifting her chin and blowed smoke in his direction as a response. Steve jumped in his car and pulled out the driveway heading to school. She shakes her head as the car drove out of sight.

These weird interactions have been increasing over the last few months. Yeah, they used to be friends. Hell, they had been neighbors since infancy. They went to school together in the day and played at each other houses everyday. But as they got to high school they went their different ways. It was a mutual separation. They had different interest which led to different social circles. They still saw each other everyday. It was a small town. There was no avoiding it, nor were they avoiding each other. But there were never times of acknowledgment in the hallways or at social events. Not until recently. But she didn't care either way.

Lyssa lit another cigarette as she looked both ways down the road. He was late picking her up again. They were definitely going to be late to school again. She didn't care about was just a place she had to go monday thru friday for eight hours. But being late would mean a phone call to her parents. That would mean another conversation about the company she kept. Lyssa did not need to give her parents another reason to hate her friends.

Just as she took the last drag of her cigarette she heard the familiar roar of an engine. Right on cue red firebird pulled up on the curb. Lyssa flicked her butt and opened the passenger door. The car was filled with giggles from her friends. Lyssa eyed the guy in her seat.

"Move" She ordered.

His giggles stopped as he looked up at her in confusion. "What?"

"Get Out." She continued to glare at him as he sheepishly stepped out

of the car and jumped in the back. Lyssa sat down and slammed the car door.

"I know. I know. I'm late." Daniel commented as he sped down the road.

Daniel wasn't apologizing and Lyssa didn't demand one. It wasn't completely his fault. His family was always making him run errands when he had to go to school. They would rather he just drop out and get a job to help support the family.

Lyssa just rolled her eyes and the group started conversing again as the tension subsided.

"I can not wait to get this year over with." Kim Wrapped her arms around her boyfriend's name from behind as he drove. "First thing I'm gonna do is get in a car and drive out of this shit town."

"Hey" Daniel called out looking at his girlfriend in the rear view mirror. "What about me?" He feigned hurt.

Kim squeezed him tighter as she leaned in. "You the one that has the car." She bit his ear playfully.

For the first time that day Lyssa smiled brightly. It was almost like all the weight of the world had been lifted off her shoulders. These were her friends. They all had their different problems. But when they were together those problems just drifted away. She loved them all. She loved every single one of them.

Lyssa turned her body to the two other boys in the back seat. Ken, her curly haired friend, wore his signature shit eating grin obviously holding back a sarcastic comment about the couple's lovey dove display. They made eye contact and Ken gave Lyssa a quick wink causing her to burst into a fit of laughter. She glanced over at Nick, who was staring out the window with a pout on his face. Her smile dropped realizing how mean she had been to him earlier. Ken noticed the shift in her behavior and looked over at the reason.

"Hey man." He nudged Nick with his elbow. "We are going to school, not a funeral."

"I know where we are going." Nick snapped back.

Lyssa felt like shit for putting her friend in such a bad mood. She wanted to make it better. But now was not the time or the place.

"I know what will lift your spirits." Ken fished for something in his jacket. "How about a little spark before school." He jiggled the joint between his fingers.

Nick's eyes lit up as he turned towards the group. Ken lit the joint and handed it to Nick. The car instantly filled with smoke as the joint was passed around. When they were in the school parking lot the teens all went their separate ways.

Lyssa snuck into her first period classroom walking behind Steve as he looked up at her. She ignored the looks and snickering as she took an empty seat. The teacher didn't pay her any mind as she took out her supplies and copied the notes to catch up.

Right before the end of class Lyssa feels a tap on her shoulder. She glanced at the person behind her. It was the newer guy. She couldn't remember his name. There were a bunch of rumors about him. All she could remember is that he was from California.

He leaned forward slowly and whispered. "You smell like smoke."

Lyssa didn't know how to take the comment. Her and her friends were known as the lazy, scumbag, burn out, losers. Those hypocrites called them these names while they drank and partied every weekend.

"Better than shit." Lyssa retorted snidely before turning back to the front of the class.

The bell rang and Lyssa stood to leave. California stood in her path. He smirked when she stepped towards him. He leaned in and took a sniff in her direction.

"Smells good." His smirk got wider as he licked his bottom lip. "Got any more?"

"Nope" Lyssa popped the p as she slipped around him.

She made for the exit ignoring the open mouth of Steve as he was about to speak to her. She went straight to the girl's bathroom and dropped her bag next to the sink. She looked into the mirror. Her green eyes were a tiny bit blood shot. But you couldn't notice unless you were looking for it. She grabbed a handful of sandy blonde hair and lifted it to her nose. She gave it a sniff and scrunched up her nose. There was a distinct odor of marijuana. She searched her bag looking for something to mask the scent. One of the stall doors opened making her jump.

"Lyssa" Kim giggled at her reaction. "You don't normally scar so easily."

Lyssa spun around, grabbing her chest, as she used the sink for support.

"Kimmy-bear" Lyssa breathed out. "Do you have any perfume I can borrow?"

Kim looked her over with a hint of concern. But she was smarter than to ask. They always told each other the important things. If it was worth talking about Lyssa would tell her.

"I'll trade ya" Kim swung her purse into the sink. "for a stick of gum."

"You're already chewing a piece of gum." Lyssa chuckled as she knelt down to dig through her bag to find the Hubba Bubba she kept specifically for Kim.

Kim spit the gum into the opposite sink "Lost its flavor."

They tossed their item at the other and caught them simultaneously. Kim tilted her head to the side as she watched her friend spray her hair.

"You're such a paranoid smoker." Kim popped the gum in her mouth smacking it obnoxiously loud. "You had like one toke."

Lyssa shot her friend a wink in the mirror as she fixed her hair. They all knew she wasn't the biggest fan of smoking weed. She hated the taste. It was a personal quirk. But that didn't stop her from smoking.

"Some asshole could smell me." Lyssa tilted her head to the door hinting at Kim to follow her. They stepped out and walked down the hall continuing their conversation. "He was sniffing at me like a fucking dog."

"Which one of these dogs was it?" Kim glanced around ready to snap at someone. "I'll snip his balls off."

"California" Lyssa answered.

"What?"

"Mr. California." Lyssa said slower. "The new guy."

"Ohhh" Kim connected the dots. "Mr. Broken Shirt Buttons"

"Mr. Goldilocks"

"Mr. Bad Ass"

"Mr. Invade Your Space" Lyssa laughed.

"He's got a nice ass though." Kim shrugged.

"Who's got a nice ass?" Daniel wrapped his arm around Kim and Lyssa shoulders squeezing between the two of them.

Both girls gave each other a knowing look before bursting out in laughter. "I gotta get to class." Lyssa shrugged his arm off before splitting off from them. "See ya at lunch." she called out behind her.

Lunch came by quickly and Lyssa headed out to the patio for their normal picnic table. She could see Nick had arrived first. He was sitting on their table tapping his drumsticks between his legs on the table to some imaginary music in his head. Lyssa walked up behind him and wrapped her arms around his shoulders. Nick's slow reaction time had him sluggishly turning to the side to look over his shoulder.

"Hey" Lyssa hugged him to her chest. "Sorry about this morning. It was shitty of me to treat you like that. No excuses."

"No worries" Nick gave her a lopsided smile as he gave her arm a

reassuring squeeze.

Lyssa gave him a sloppy kiss on the cheek before releasing him and sitting next to him on the table. Nick rested his arm around her shoulder while wiping his cheek with the other hand. All was forgiven.

The rest of the group showed up and they chatted about anything and everything.

"Hey Hey Hey" Daniel called out. "We seem to have royalty in our presence."

All eyes shifted over to the new person. Steve Stood right out of the circle kicking at an imaginary rock their way.

"What do we owe the pleasure of your company, king Steve?" Ken asked uninterested. Steve shyly Lifted his head to look at Lyssa.

"I saw you came in late to class today." He carefully approached her while watching the others.

"Yeah. It happens." Lyssa shrugged. "What of it?"

"I thought maybe i could help and give you a ride to school."

"She already has a ride."Daniel stood up and flicked his cigarette to the side.

"It was just an offer." Steve put his hands up in surrender and took a step back. "I how her parents can be about this shit. If they find out-

"Thanks for the offer" Lyssa cut him off offering a small smile. "But I'm good."

Steve nodded in understanding and turned to walk away. He got a few steps before spinning around to face them.

"I saw Hargrove corner you after class."

The group perked up at the declaration.

"Who?" Daniel glanced back at Lyssa.

Lyssa only looked confused. It took a moment to realized who he was talking about.

"California" She turned to to Kim.

"Ohhh" Kim remembered the nickname.

"Yeah... Well..." Steve tried to find the right words. "Just be careful around him. He's bad news." Lyssa only stared at him. "Okay then I'll see you later." He turned around and quickly made his exit.

Lyssa continued to stare at the spot Steve was standing in confusion. What was that all about? What was with that warning? There was something off in Steve's tone of voice. Was it concern? Was it fear? Why did Steve even care?

A quick squeeze from Nick brought her back to earth.

"Lyssa" Lyssa blinked to find Daniel in her face."Lyssa! Is that guy hassling you?"

"What guy?" Lyssa shook her head.

"Hargrove!" Daniel waited for a response that didn't come.

"California! Is he hassling you?" Ken asked. His nromal sarcastic tone was gone, replaced with something more serious.

"No" Lyssa shook Nick's tight grip off her shoulder. "He just asked for some weed."

The boys continued to stare at Lyssa. Kim looked between the four of them. Tensions were high. Kim blurted out the first thing that came to her head.

"Isn't that the guy that beat the crap out of Steve last semester?" They all turned their attention to Kim. "Steve came to school with his face smashed up. Rumor around school is that it was Hargrove that did it."

"I remember that." Daniel Grabbed his head as he was trying to

remember any details. "That fucking psycho messed him up real bad."

"Come on guys." Lyssa tried.

"What do we do?" Nick Wrapped his arms around Lyssa protectively.

"Guys?!"

"We make it clear you fuck with one of us you fuck with all of us." Ken stated matter of factly.

"GUYS!?" Lyssa yelled silencing all of them. "He literally said two sentences to me." She forces Nick off of her "You are all over reacting. Okay?"

I weak "okay" came from the group.

Lyssa jumps off the table to face them. "I said Okay?"

"OKAY" The group called out louder.

"Okay then" Lyssa smiled brightly. "What were we talking about?" She smacked her hands together.

"I-ummm...we" Nick stuttered as Lyssa sat between him and Kim. "Are we all coming over to mine to band practice?"

"Can't" Ken answered. "Going over to Lyssa's to study for our test."

"Study?" Daniel made a face. "Why ya gotta study?"

"To pass the test. To pass the class. To graduate. To get out of this town." Lyssa quipped. Daniel mimicked her chatty face until she chucked a twig at him. "You could use a study session or two, Mr. Desario."

"Oh yeah! You do private sessions Miss Franco." He smirked and wiggled his eyebrows at her.

"You're a pig, Daniel." Kim gave him a playful shove out of their space.

The bell rang signalling the end of lunch. The group split up. Ken and

Lyssa teased each other as they walked down the hallway to their class. Ken's arm was draped over Lyssa shoulder while her arm wrapped around his waist. Lyssa made fun of his curly-fro while she twirled one of the tight curls around her finger. That is until Ken straightened up. Lyssa could feel his muscles tense underneath her hand. But he continued to walk forward, almost dragging her along with him. Lyssa looked up at her friends. But Ken wasn't paying attention to her. He was glaring straight ahead. She followed his line of sight when she saw the issue. California was down the hall walking towards them.

Billy spotted her in the arms of another man. He didn't know the guys name. Billy wondered if he was her boyfriend. Whoever he was, he was glaring daggers at him. It was amusing. Billy shifted his gaze back to the girl. As they passed Billy gave her a wink before breaking his gaze.

Lyssa had to tighten her hold on Ken as his body followed his glare at the back of California's head. It was her turn to dragged him down the hall and into their class.

Once they were inside Lyssa let go of his waist and shoved him away from her. "What the fuck is your problem man?"

"Did you see that? Did you see the way he looked at you? Ken rubbed his face. "He looked like he wanted to devour you."

"Do you not see what he's doing?" Lyssa pinched the bridge of her nose. "He was goating you. You're just feeding his ego."

"You're right" Ken sat at his desk. "Sorry"

"Damn right you are." She nudged his shoulder.

They gave each other a goofy smile and waited for class to start.

The rest of the day Lyssa thought about her little situation. In all actuality there was a very good chance they would come back to school and everything will be the way it was. California wouldn't talk to her again and everything will go back to normal. But then Steve had to open his god damn mouth. He just had to be worried or

concerned for her. He just had to say something in front of her friends. She would definitely be having words with him next time she had a chance.

The last bell of the day chimed. Lyssa and Kim made their way to the firebird. As Kim took the front seat and Lyssa jumped in the back the roar of an engine catching their attention. Both Kim and Lyssa glanced out the windows. A blue camero cruised by them. None other than California was behind the wheel . He gave the boys an upward nod before peeling out, kicking out a cloud of smoke. Daniel got in the drivers seat while Ken and Nick sat on either side of Lyssa. Blaring music filled the car as Daniel sped off.

"I'm gonna beat the shit out of that guy." Daniel drummed his fingers on the steering wheel.

No you are not." Lyssa stated.

"We can't do nothing." Nick argued.

"Yes you can." She pointed.

"We are just worried about you." Kim tried to explain.

"I know."

"We just want to keep you safe." Nick continued.

"I know." Lyssa understood their reactions. Lyssa would do the same if it was any one of them.

"Because we love you." Kim stated.

"and I love you guys" Lyssa reached for Kim's hand.

"You're our girl, Lyssa." Dniel was still seething. "Noone messes with our girl."

"I know Daniel." She squeezed his shoulder in reassurance.

"Because you're our girl." He muttered in his own world.

"Yes I am." Lyssa climbed over the center console and planted a kiss on Daniel's cheek. Daniel smiled at the affection. "You'll all see tomorrow. This will all blow over tomorrow."

The car pulled up to Lyssa's house. Ken and Lyssa climbed out of the back and said their good byes. As they headed to house they heard the door to the neighbor's house opened. Steve stepped out in a rush. He looked like he was heading her way when he noticed she had company. He stopped on his porch and watched as they walked to the house. Lyssa gave him a bored expression as she glanced his way. Steve gave her a quick nod that she didn't return.

They walked into the house shutting the door behind them. Lyssa and Ken spent the night studying in her room with the door open. Her mother checked in with them multiple times to ask if they needed a drink or snack. Ken even stuck around for dinner. Her parents didn't like her friends. But they hated Ken the least. Maybe it was because he lived down the road so they knew his family had money. Maybe they thought he was their best chance out of her loser friends to marry her. Then when he went to work with his father and eventually take over the business we would be set financially for life. They wouldn't have to worry about their little girl running around god knows where with these crazy ideas, like freedom, through her head. Her parents had no real interest in what Lyssa wanted. But in all fairness Lyssa didn't care about what they wanted either.

2. Chapter 2

The next morning Lyssa sat on her front step smoking a cigarette waiting for her ride.

"Hey Lyssa" Steve was standing in her front yard a few feet away.
"Got a second?"

"I guess so." Lyssa blew out some smoke.

"I just- I wanted to talk to you about Hargrove."

"I already got that covered." She waved him off

"It 's just that he's" Steve searched the right words. "aggressively persistent."

"I said I've got it covered." she said more assertively.

"He won't back down easily-"

"Is that why you thought it was a good idea to stick your nose where it didn't belong?" She snapped back.

"I was trying-"

"I doesn't matter what your intentions were Steve. I had this shit covered. But then you had to open your big mouth and get my friends involved. " She flicked some ash his way. "Now they are riled up for a fight and that can't happen. California will only get off on a challenge. I just need to lay low until he moves on. Trust me. This isn't my first time."

"You're going to bore him to surrender?" Steve raised an eyebrow.

"Yep" She popped the p smugly.

"That's brilliant." Steve chuckled.

"Sweet and simple" She took another drag of her cigarette.

"I only thought I was helping." Steve scratched the back of his head looking away from her.

Daniel's car pulled up earlier than normal.

"Looks like our time is up." Lyssa put the cigarette out and started walking to the car.

"Hey wait" Steve caught up to her. "Maybe we could hang out later and catch up?"

Lyssa was about ready to decline the offer. But then she caught his eyes. Something about them was pleading, almost desperate.

"I'll be out of the house all weekend partying with friends." The answer looked like it had crushed his. She quickly added. "How about Sunday afternoon?"

"Deal" Steve took off to his car.

"What was that all about?" Daniel asked while driving.

"Was King Steve requesting the attention of his loyal subject?" Ken added sarcastically.

"Chill guys" Lyssa quietly defended. "He's never done us any harm."

"If you say so." Kim teased.

Billy leaned on his car as he watched his new conquest walking under the arm of the tallest guy in their group. A different guy than yesterday. Maybe she didn't have a boyfriend. Maybe she was just friendly. If that was the case than this would be a walk in the park. He followed behind them inconspicuously as they embraced each other before they went to their separate classes. Billy waited a few minutes before heading into class to take his seat. He watched the back of her head as she prepared for the lesson. He could tell she was purposefully ignoring him. She kept her body facing the class. Never once did she turn her body when she set down her purse or grab her bags. She was playing coy with him.

Billy leaned forward and reached for a lock of hair that draped down

her back. He could see the shiver go up her spine as he curled it around his finger. He slowly brought it up to his nose and inhaled the scent.

"Mmm. Wild Berry" Billy used his elbows to support his weight as he leaned in further. "How did you know that was my favorite? You trying to seduce me or something?"

Lyssa reached behind her and shifted her hair out of Billy's grasp to her shoulder. Billy chuckled as he sat back into his seat. For the entire class Lyssa faced the teacher and Billy stared at the back of her head. When the bell rang she shot up and made a swift exit. Billy was right behind her. He loved the idea of a chase. He was about to open his mouth to make another comment hoping to get a reaction out of her. Before he could act Steve had slid between them to leave the class.

"What's your problem Harrington?" He shoved at Steve's back.

"No problem man." Steve straightened up and slowly walked out of the classroom "Just walking."

When they got out of class the girl was gone. Billy growled in annoyance and headed to his next class.

It was quiet at the picnic table during lunch. The group was a little on edge waiting for Lyssa. When she finally arrived they flanked her all at once. No one said a word. They all just raked their eyes up and down her body. Nothing looked out of place. Lyssa casually walked through them and took a seat on the table. She smiled wide and gestured for all of them to join her. The group simultaneously let out a sigh of relief. No news was good news in their book. Lyssa's shoulders slumped as the groups tension dissolved. The group set back into their normal routine.

"Band practice today?" Nick asked.

"In" each agreed.

Lyssa and Ken split from the group and headed to class. Walking down the hallway, Lyssa spotted a familiar face.

"Hey" She gave Ken's waist a little squeeze. "Go on ahead." She released him. "I'll be there in a few."

"I can hang back." Ken offered.

"I'm good" She nodded as she slowed her step.

Ken kept his pace and headed to class. When he was gone Lyssa spun around. She casually walked up toward the bot digging in his locker

"Jonathan" Lyssa smiled as she leaned on the locker neck to his. Jonathan smiled shyly as he gathered his books.

Jonathan Byers had always caught Lyssa's attention. He was the most intriguing boy in this entire school, maybe even the town. Well at least that's what Lyssa thought. Jonathan was the very definition of loner. Other than his family, Jonathan didn't seem to have anyone. What intrigued Lyssa the most was that Jonathan had chosen this. It was if he had made a conscious decision to not connect with his fellow peers. Lyssa had a theory that he had done this out of a combination of fear and need. Jonathan's family life was no secret. A small town like Hawkins could spread rumors like wildfire. Everyone knew the struggle Jonathan's mother went through when her husband ran off. That is when Lyssa believes Jonathan decided to leave his childhood behind him. He would have needed to step up and take on extra responsibilities while his mother worked to provide for them. He wouldn't have had the luxury of hanging out after school or playing with friends on the weekend. He needed to take care of his brother and take care of the house while his mother took a double shift. He needed to focus on his family. The second half of the equation was possibly more subconscious. Lyssa believed that Jonathan was scared. Taking a step away from society to focus on family is a noble cause. But jumping back into a society you voluntarily left can be more of a challenge. What if society rejects you? What if society decides it was better off without you? Then you are no longer alone by choice. Ever since they were kids Lyssa had always talked to him. She was always inviting him to hang out with her friends or eat lunch with them. He had always declined. But he never pushed her away either. Jonathan liked to keep his distance and Lyssa could respect that.

"What you doing this weekend?" Lyssa asked.

"Not much" Jonathan answered.

"We are all going to Nick's house to watch them rehearse." Lyssa offered.

"Can't. I have plans with Nancy, My girlfriend." He smiled subtly.

"Johnny boy, When did you get a girl?" She punched his shoulder playfully. "Nancy who?"

"Wheeler"

Lyssa blinked in confusion. "Isn't she dating Steve"

"They broke up." His tone of voice was indecisive. "a few months ago."

"OoOoOo" She teased. "Did you have anything to do with that?" Jonathan remained silent as his eyes darted in every direction but her's. "You scoundrel." She punched again a little harder. Bring her along."

"I don't think that's really her crowd." He tried to make the comment sound less offensive.

"You never know until you try." She shrugged off the comment. "Maybe we all have more in common than we think. Stranger things have happened." Jonathan chuckled at her last comment. "I got to get to class. But I'll see you around."

Lyssa offered a farewell. When she turned around her body slammed into an immovable object in front of her.

"Sorry" Lyssa shook her head to get her bearings before she looked up. California was standing with his hand in his hair using his elbow to lean on the locker.

"Funny bumping into you here." Billy smirked giving her a once over.

"Dude, you are trying too hard." She took a step back to regain some

personal space. "It's a school hallway. People are bound to bump into each other."

His eyes shifted to her's. An emotion Lyssa couldn't quite pinpoint flashed through his expressions before it was gone.

"Maybe if you had watched where you were going it wouldn't have happened." He snapped at her.

Both glared at eachother refusing to back down first.

"Lyssa?" Jonathan came up behind her. "You good."

Billy shifted his gaze to the boy behind her. Any emotion was gone and replaced with annoyance.

"All good" Lyssa called back. Jonathan hesitated before turning to leave.

"Lyssa is it?" Billy asked with a smirk.

"Yep" The side of her mouth cringed at the sound of her name coming from him.

"Saw you riding in that pathetic excuse of a car earlier. Thought you could use a real ride." He licked his lips at the double entendre. "Figured we could find something fun to do in this shit town."

"I have plans after school." Lyssa side stepped him to start walking down the hall.

Billy followed suit. "Ditch'em"

"No"

Billy jumped in front of her before she could enter her class. "I bet I could show you a better time than those losers." He motioned his head to ken, who was sitting at his desk.

"Listen here California, Cause I'm only gonna say this once." She growled taking a step closer. "My friends are better than you in every way imaginable. You, on the other hand, are a boring cliche. Now

why don't you run along and go fuck every other girl in this school, kay?"

Lyssa didn't wait for a response as she walked pass him, shoulder checking him in the process. Billy stood there a moment to make sense of what just happened. He glared in her direction one more time before walking away. He needed something to hit or fuck in the next ten minutes or he was going to explode.

Lyssa flopped into her seat and took a calming breath.

"We good." Ken asked after seeing the interaction.

"Peachy" Lyssa smiled sarcastically.

Lyssa didn't mean to snap like that. It was only going to cause more trouble than good. But California crossed a line back there. No one talks like that about her friends to her.

""

3. Chapter 3

The weekend passed in a blur of loud music, hard liquor, and fun. It was like this every weekend with her friends. Lyssa spent the night at either Kim's or Daniel's place. She would show her appreciation by hiding five dollar bills in their underwear drawers. When she woke up Sunday she could feel an uncomfortable pressure on her stomach. Tilting her head to the side she saw Daniel passed out on his stomach. His head was under her armpit nuzzling her left breast. His arm was draped across her stomach hugging her hip. Lyssa peeled his arm off and sat up to take a look at her surroundings. They were in Daniel's room. The sun was shining brightly through the window. The group would almost always collectively wake up at noon on the weekends. She stretched her arms over her head letting her spine pop.

Daniel grumbled at the sound and rolled onto his back. "What time is it?"

"Dunno" Lyssa looked around the room. "You don't have a clock"

"Mmmm" Daniel sat up wrapping his arms around her waist. He nuzzled her neck and shoulder while using his weight to pull her down.

"Daniel?!" Lyssa landed twisted to land on her side facing Daniel as he crushed her to his chest.

"Five more minutes." Daniel's hot breath hit her ear as he drifted back to sleep. Lyssa admitted defeat as she wrapped her arm and leg around Daniel and fell asleep to the sound of his snoring.

It was one in the afternoon and, after a quick stop to pick up Kim, Lyssa was heading home for the first time this weekend. They were casually cruising down main street talking about stupid shit. Daniel slowed to a stop at the light. The rev of an engine had them turning their heads to the left. A blue camero pulled up to the light beside them.

"Hey there amigos." Billy shouted pass the little red head in the

passenger seat.

"You know you're on the wrong side of the road there A-Me-Go"

Daniel chuckled.

Lyssa sunk in the passenger seat hoping California wouldn't notice her.

"Don't worry" Billy revved his engine in response. "We'll be leaving you in the dust in no time." Daniel smiled widely rolling his eyes and head back to the girls. Billy revved his engine again. "What?" He called out. "You think that tonka toy could win against my beauty?"

"Don't antagonize him." Lyssa whispered.

"Lyssa?!" Billy leaned over the little girl to get a better look. "Nice bumping into you again." He winked before turning his attention back to Daniel. "What do you say man? You think you can beat me?"

"Fuck this guy." Kim yelled as she punched the back seat. "You can smoke that piece of shit."

"That's more like it." Billy howled in excitement. "Let's make this interesting."

"How much?" Daniel revved his engine in response.

"Now we are all friends here and I don't take money from friends." Billy smirked at Daniel then Lyssa and back again. "How bout a date with Miss Friendly over there?"

Lyssa's jaw dropped at the audacity.

"Fuck No" Daniel sneered.

"And if you win" Billy continued, ignoring Daniel. "You get my car."

Everyone in the firebird went silent. Daniel glanced at Lyssa.

"Don't Even Think About It." Lyssa growled.

"I wasn't gonna." Daniel snapped back.

"But he can take this asshole." Kim argued.

Kim immediately sank back in her seat from the force of the deadly look Lyssa shot her.

"No De-" The light turned green and the camero's wheels squealed as it sped off. "FUCK" Daniel yelled as he slammed his foot on the gas.

"GO GO GO" Kim screamed as she slapped the driver seat repeatedly.

"I'm going." Daniel yelled. "Shut your trap."

The firebird quickly caught up with the firebird. But they couldn't pass it. Every time they tried the camero would jerk in front of them.

"Daniel?!" Lyssa called out.

"I'm trying Lyssa!" Daniel tried to squeeze in the right side.

"No Daniel" Lyssa screamed. "That's my turn."

Lyssa lunged for the wheel causing the car to swerve sharply to the right. Daniel had to quickly swerve again to dodge the car in the other lane. The car was silent as it slowed down to the speed limit. That silence was broken by a delirious giggle coming from the back seat. The giggling got louder and became contagious as Daniel busted out in laughter. Tears were forming at the corner of Lyssa's eyes as she stiffened her own giggles. She had to keep a straight face. This was serious.

"That was" Daniel coughed.

"Insane" Lyssa wiped her eyes as she regained control. "What were you thinking?"

"I had it handled." Daniel argued. "We would never let anything happen to you."

"Whatever." Lyssa folded her arm and sunk in her seat.

Lyssa jumped out of the car before it even came to a complete stop. She ignored her name being called out by her friends as she crossed

the yard and slammed the door. She ran up the stairs two at a time wanting to take a shower.

"Melissa darling." Lyssa's mother called from the kitchen. "Can you come down here a second?"

Lyssa groaned as she spun on her heels and went back down the stairs. When she walked into the kitchen her mother was setting down a plate of food on the island sliding it her way. Lyssa accepted the offering taking a large bite of the sandwich.

"Haven't seen you in a couple of days." Her mother stated.

"I was out" Lyssa said through a mouthful of food.

"I trust you weren't making a fool of yourself around town" It was always the same start to this conversation.

"Don't worry" Lyssa rolled her eyes. "We didn't get into any trouble."

"People talk-"

"It's a small town." Lyssa took another bit. the faster she ate the faster she could leave. "That's what people do."

"If only you would show a little respect for yourself." Her mother said softly.

"You mean if only I didn't hang out with my friends." There was no point in beating around the bush.

"The things the community say about those disadvantaged people."

"My friends" Lyssa corrected.

"I'm just worried about the path you're going down."

"Mother." Lyssa dropped her sandwich on the plate. She needed to cut to the chase fast. "My grades are not slipping and I have no criminal record. You have nothing to complain about."

Her mother sighed knowing they were getting nowhere. "Steve

Harrington called for you today." She smiled at the change of topic. "Since I didn't know when you would be home I invited him for dinner." Lyssa nodded in understanding. "I expect you cleaned up and homework done before dinner time." She nooded again excusing herself from the kitchen.

Lyssa jumped in the shower and let the warm water run down her body as she soaked in the silence and serenity. It had been a boozed filled day weekend with little sleep and no shower. Everything washed away and went down the drain. When dinner was called out Lyssa headed down the stairs in a black tank top and tan shorts. Her long hair was mostly dried and the natural waves had taken over. As she headed to the dining room the sound of the doorbell stopped her in her tracks.

"Who the hell could that be?" She opened the door to reveal Steve standing there with a smile and a bottle of wine. "Oh!" Lyssa smiled back at him "Come on in." she moved to the side.

"My mother told me to bring this." He lifted the bottle.

"I doubt my parents will let us have any." Lyssa said as she headed to the dining room with Steve in tow.

"Steven my boy." Lyssa's father offered his hand to shake when they walked in "How have you been?"

"Good sir." He held up the bottle. "My mother..."

"Why aren't you a dear." Lyssa's mother took the bottle out of his hand. "Take a seat honey." She kissed her husband's cheek and went back into the kitchen.

Once everyone was seated her mother came back with a roast in hand. Her father served their plates and everyone began to eat.

Lyssa's father was the first to speak. "So Steven how is school going?"

"Good" Steve cleared his throat and wiped his mouth with his napkin."Really good."

"What are your plans after high school?"

"Probably work for my dad in the summer and then college." Steve explained. "I've already filled out my applications."

"Those extra curricular activities should help you stand out." Her father pointed out. "Any chance of a basketball scholarship?"

"Nah," Steve shrugged. "I'm not that good."

"At least you are doing something and being apart of the community. That's more than I can say for this one." He gestured towards his daughter.

"I've been applying to colleges too." Lyssa jumped to her own defense. "I just heard from-"

"Sweetie we've already discussed this" Her mother interrupted.

"You are going to community college to stay in town." Her father finished. Lyssa stuffed more mashed potatoes in her mouth to stop the nasty words from coming out.

After dinner Lyssa excused herself and Steve to her room.

"Okay darling" Her mother smiled. "Have fun"

Lyssa blinked in surprise when a complaint or order didn't come from either of her parents. she grabbed Steve by the wrist and pulled him up the stairs and into her room. She shut the door behind them expecting her mother to open it in about ten minutes or so to ask if they needed anything.

"Sorry about that." She apologized, Not exactly sure what she was apologizing for at the moment.

"It's alright" Steve shrugged. "My folks are the same way."

"So Harrington" Lyssa sauntered over to her bed and took a seat. "What's going on?" She asked with a hint of suspicion.

"What?" Steve jerked in surprise. "Nothing is going on. Why do you ask?"

"Oh come on Steve Don't play dumb." She leaned back resting on her arms to support her weight. "You're the one that wanted to hang out. Last time one of us went over to the other's house was over two years ago. I know we stay civil. We don't hate each other. But this" She gestured between the two of them. "is out of the ordinary." She patted the spot next to her on the bed. "What's going on?"

Steve relaxed a bit as he sat down next to her. "It's just been a crazy year."

""Does it have anything to do with Nancy Wheeler? She asked.

"Sorta" Steve looked away.

"Sorry about that, by the way" She apologized again. "I literally just found out."

"It's been over for months now." Steve said to the wall. "I'm over it."

"Steve, I may be slow on the updates. But i'm not oblivious. I saw the way you looked at her when you two were together. You cared about her." Lyssa hesitated a moment. "Did you love her?"

"Yeah" Steve ran his hands through his hair. "I did. It may sound stupid, but she made me a better person."

"You've always been a good person, Steve."

"Anyways," Steve continued. "When I was with her I started seeing things in a new light. I realized how much of a selfish little shit I've been. ""

"It's called growth, Steve." She placed her hand on top of his. "Everyone goes through it in their own time. Some people grow sooner than others."

Steve turned his hand to link their fingers together. "Is that what happened to us?"

"It's hard to explain." Lyssa thought about the past, which she never did. "It was like I couldn't talk to you guys anymore. Every time i tried to have a serious or thoughtful conversation I felt like i was

bringing the group down. I didn't want to be a downer. So I decided to distance myself. You were the hardest to let go. You were my best friend. You helped me through so much."

"You didn't have to be alone." He squeezed her hand.

"I wan't alone." Lyssa chuckled with a hint of sadness. "I had Ken. He was going through the same thing as me. we were eachothers life line. Then we met Daniel, Kim, and Nick and became one big happy family." She smiled softly remembering their good times together. When she glanced over Steve was staring at his lap. "You okay there?"

"Yeah" Steve shook his inner thoughts away and turned to face her. "I just wish I was there for you. You said I was your best friend. But you were my best friend too. I could talk to you about everything. You were there for all of my insecurities." He stood up abruptly and started pacing. " You were my kiss when I was afraid of doing it wrong. You let me practice taking off your bra so I didn't make a fool of myself. I lost my virginity to you." He said a little louder.

"Shhh" Lyssa stood up and tried to calm him.

They waited in silence for a few minutes. That's when Lyssa noticed something weird. Her mother hadn't come barging through the closed door to offer them something and spy.

"Just a sec" Lyssa opened the door and quietly walked down the hall.

She peaked down the stairs to see her parents reading in their chairs. Lyssa shook her head in disappointment. Her parents were bias pieces of shit. If it were any of her other friends they would be freaking out about of closed door. Maybe they thought Steve was the one to put her on the 'right path'. When she came back to her room Steve was still standing. But he had calmed down. She took his hand and guided him back to the bed to sit.

Taking a deep breath Lyssa looked at Steve giving him a comforting smile. "You were my first kiss too. Don't forget you let me practice a few things on you as well." She winked at him causing Steve to chuckle. "You were the first person I had sex with too. In the most confusing time of my life you were there for me." Lyssa forced the

tears at bay. "Just because we took different paths doesn't mean we lost eachother."

"So friends again?" Steve looked at her pleadingly.

"Were you listening to a word I said?" Lyssa grabbed Steve's shirt pulling him closer. She rested her forehead on his "Of course we are friend."

Both laughed and wrapped eachother in a hug.

"So" Steve broke the hug. His hand rubbed away the wetness from his eye. "I... ummm" He cleared his throat. "brought a movie. Just in case things went well tonight."

"That's the over confident Steve I know." She nudged him.

"I remember you like horror movies." He held up the VHS to show the title.

"Evil Dead" Lyssa squealed. "I love that movie."

"Oh" Steve looked at the title. "You've already seen it."

"Don't worry" Lyssa snatched the tape out of his hand. "I'll protect you from the scary monsters."

"AhHh" Steve cringed away from the screen. Lyssa grabbed the popcorn from his lap before it could spill over. "Tell me when it's over."

"The gore is the best part." Lyssa laughed as she pulled Steve closer to right himself.

"How can you watch this stuff?" Steve covered his eyes with his hand.

"What?!" Lyssa shoved another handful of popcorn in her mouth. "Ash is kinda cute. Don't you think?"

Steve peeked between his fingers before quickly covering them again. Lyssa took pity on him and turned the volume down. Steve smiled in thanks. That's when Lyssa noticed a cut on his lip. It looked scabbed

over. Lyssa cupped his chin and traced the cut with her thumb. Steve winced at the contact.

"Had a run in with Hargrove during gym." Steve answered her silent question.

"What's that guys deal?" Lyssa released his chin.

"He's a psychopath" Steve spat. "He seems to really hate me for some reason."

"But seriously, what's his deal?" She asked in a different way. "All I know is he's from California."

"There's not much to tell." Steve popped a kernel in his mouth. "He has a little sister, sorry step sister, named Max. She hangs around some kids I know. She says he's still sour about the move. He harasses me every chance he gets. Not sure why. He's already the new king of the school. You would think that would be good enough."

"Maybe he's just counting down til he can leave?" Lyssa suggested knowing that was what she was doing. "He has all these followers. But are any of them his friends?"

"Just mindless drones following his every word." Steve spoke from experience.

"Maybe he's keeping his distance for a reason." Lyssa considered. "Does he have a girlfriend?"

"HA" Steve almost choked on his popcorn. "Hargrove doesn't date. He bangs them then sends them packing. What's with the questions? Your game plan not going accordingly?"

"Best to know your enemy." Lyssa shrugged.

"But you'll let me know if something happens, right?"

"Right." Lyssa stopped the movie and pressed rewind.

4. Chapter 4

Monday was the start of the same routine. Daniel was late picking her up for school again. Hargrove didn't engage with her at all during class. Though she could feel his hard stare at the back of her skull. She quietly ignored it as the day went by calmly. Lunch came with Lyssa and her friends sitting outside on the picnic table. Lyssa laid on the table with her head in Daniel's lap. Daniel slowly stroked her hair while Nick used body to play the drums with his sticks. With every strike to her chin, breast, stomach, leg,, knee, and shoe she would let out a different sound. The group laughed at their amusement.

"Bet I can get you to make those sounds in the back of my car" The groups attention was stolen by Bill as he sauntered towards them with his boys in tow.

"What are you doing out here?" Nick twirled a drumstick around his fingers as he walked around to the front of the table.

"I'm here to collect" Bill leaned to the side, pass Nick, to look at Daniel and Lyssa. "on our bet."

"There ain't no fucking bet man." Daniel called back. Lyssa sat up and let her legs hang from the table.

"What?" Billy stepped forward pushing Nick out of the way. "Ya scared?" He got right in Daniel's face. "Scared i'll show her what she's been missing?" He gave Lyssa a smirk before turning back to Daniel. "Scared she won't come back to you freaks once she gets a taste of what I can give her?"

Daniel gave him a shove forcing Billy a few steps back. All her friends jumped up as Billy's boys squared up behind him. Lyssa jumped up and ran between Billy and Daniel.

"Back up." She shoved the both of them hard. "I said back up." She turned to her friends. "Let me handle this."

"No way" Kim yelled trying to shove her way pass Nick and Ken. "You don't owe him a god damn thing."

"Let Me Handle This" Her words dripped with venom.

"Fine." Daniel straightened his jacket as he headed back to the table.

"But if you need us." Nick took a step forward.

"I know where to find ya." She smiled back at him.

Satisfied with her response Nick turned around taking Ken and Kim with him. Kim put up a fight. But she was eventually pulled into Daniel's arms and calmed down. They all kept their eyes on her. Lyssa turned around and stomped over to Bill and his boys.

"I'm thinkin' saturday. Pick you up at eight." Billy smiled in victory.

"You" Lyssa focused her order to the boys around Billy "Leave Now." She pointed at the door.

Billy kept his smirk as the boys didn't budge. Lyssa looked at him expectantly.

"Take a hike boys" Billy ordered. Lyssa waited for the boys to shuffle out of the patio area.

"No I'm saying this to you in private out of respect." Lyssa took a few steps closer, almost chest to chest. She looked up directly into his eyes. "The answer is no." Her words were cement. "You've had your fun. But this little game is over."

Billy licked his lower lip and smirked down at her. With nothing left to say Lyssa turned around leaving him there.

"If eight doesn't work we can move it to eight thirty. " Billy called out teasingly.

Returning to his group the boys were all a buzz.

"Why are you wasting your time with that freak?" One boy asked.

"Bet she's great in the sack, though" The other added.

"Gonna have to let us know if it's worth the effort."

Billy shook the idiots off as he headed to class. While the teacher was giving her lecture Billy was going over his interactions with Lyssa. She wasn't like these other cows. Boyfriend or not, almost every girl at this high school had thrown themselves at him. Even a few teachers had become a notch on his bed post. The only ones that didn't jump in line were the prudes. Billy had seen the way Lyssa had hung on the other freaks. She was no prude. When he asked about her no one had any information on her. "The freaks aren't worth the gossip." One had mentioned. They were no help at all. Those freaks she called friends were another issue all together. They were all stuck to her like glue. It was fucking pathetic. They were all over protective of her. What was it about her that made her worth protecting so passionately. But the reason didn't matter. He would win this game eventually.

On the other side of school Lyssa was trying not to fall asleep in her seat. The adrenaline from lunch had dissipate and she felt sluggish. She knew things with Hargrove were far from over. But she had no idea where to go from here.

"Miss Franco" The teacher called for her holding a piece of paper.
"From the office."

Lyssa took the note and read it. It said. 'Head Straight Home After School'

Lyssa sighed in annoyance. She knew she was pushing it with the morning tardies.

The minute she walked into the house the phone rang. As soon as she took the ringer off the hook she could hear her mother yelling. Her parents were pissed. It didn't help that Daniel was her ride making him the problem in their minds. They had banned her from his car. They had already set up alternative transportation for her. Steve would now drive her to and from school. It was a good thing they couldn't see her roll her eyes at their dramatic overreaction to the situation. Steve was her next call. They easily came to an agreement that he would drive her to work and Daniel would give her a ride home. Daniel was not as calm about the news. That was how half the week went by.

A few days had gone by and Billy had been getting more furious each day he saw Lyssa getting out of Steve Harrington's car. He had let it slide when she refused a ride with him to go with her friends. But riding with Harrington was a whole other matter. The thought of the two together talking and laughing, laughing at him, had him slamming the pedal to the floor as the car zoomed through the streets.

"Billy slow down." Max screamed at him as she held onto the passenger seat. "You're gonna kill us." He would have been at Lyssa's house by now if he didn't have to drop off his bitch step sister at her friend's house. "I said slow down"

Max grabbed at the wheel. Billy had to span out of his anger to right himself on the road. He really didn't like the balls Max had grown over the last few months. He would have to find a way to put her back in her place. But one problem at a time. Billy skidded away once Max's feet touched the pavement. He knew exactly where she lived. It was a small shit town.

Billy slammed the brakes in front of her house and stormed through her front yard. Before he could make it to the front porch the door opened. A skinny, tall, stick of a girl came out the front door. She had the same sandy wavy hair as Lyssa. But it was a lot shorter and her face was full of freckles. An arm snaked through the girl's arm pulling her back. Lyssa's head popped as she pulled the girl in for a quick kiss on the lips. Both girls giggled as the younger one walked out and down the stairs. Billy glared down at the girl as he shoved pass her.

"California!" Lyssa stood there in shock as Billy pushed the door open wide and walked inside. She swiftly composed herself. "Where do you get off barging in here?"

"HAHAHA That's rich coming from you, Franco." Billy laughed manically "Where the fuck do you get off?" Lyssa looked at him in confusion which only pissed him off more. He pointed a finger digging it into her chest. "Why are you riding around with Harrington?"

"What's it to you?" She slapped his finger away and shoved him a bit harder than necessary. "Not that it's any of your business. But Steve

and I are friends."

"Liar" Billy growled taking slow steps towards her. "Ya know what I think? I think Harrington is fucking you. But I don't think Harrington will mind if I take a turn."

Billy almost had her cornered against the door. Lyssa was breathing hard as her eyes darted around the room. There was no time for a well thought out plan. She had to rely on her instincts.

Striking as fast as a rattle snake, Lyssa kneed Billy in the groin. She knew she had missed. But it had the desired affect of crippling him for a time. She stepped around him planning on running for the back door to escape.

"You bitch" Billy tackled her side before she could get by forcing her to land on her shoulder. But she didn't give up. The two wrestled on the floor to gain the upper hand. Lyssa kicked and punched as she tried to break free. But Billy wound up on top of her pinning her wrists on either side of her head.

"Damn you got some spunk." Billy howled as he threw head back to get the hair out of his eyes. "I like that." He leaned down to whisper in her ear. "Now I would never force a lady. I use the word lady loosely by the way. So you can show me to your room and I will show you exactly what Harrington doesn't got" Lyssa frantically shook her head. A second wind kicked up as she struggled with new vigor. Billy lifted her arms and top half of her body off the ground before slamming her back down. He returned back to her ear and continued. "Or i could show that little sister of yours a good time." He took her ear lobe into his mouth and sucked. She had stopped struggling making Billy think she had accepted his offer.

"Sister?" Lyssa voice barely came out as a whisper.

Billy lifted his head to look at her. "The girl that just left. She looked a year younger than you."

He searched her eyes. But all he found was confusion. If that wasn't her sister than who was it? He looked around the room. Any pictures he saw were of her and her parents. He looked back down at her and

scanned her body. Her face was flushed. But that could have been from the tussle. Her lips were a bit swollen and slightly tinted red. His eyes shifted to a spot on her neck. He freed one of her wrists to pinch her chin and force her to turn her head to the side. There were red smear marks all over her neck. Lyssa used her free hand to shove at his chest. Billy sat back on her pelvis staring down at her as he processed the information.

A moment of silence had passed, Lyssa still wasn't sure how to get Billy off of her. Time ran out when Bill started laughing. The soft laughter got more manic as he wrapped his arms around his stomach.

"You're a- You're a-" He tried to complete the sentence. But his laughter kept cutting him short. "You're gay!" He spat out between breaths.

Lyssa's eyes widened in fear. "Get Off Me"

She shoved him to the side. Billy fell off still clutching his sides. He rolled around on the floor as Lyssa got to her feet. The laughter sputtered down to a low chuckle. Billy slowly got to his feet. He flipped his hair out of his face and wiped the moisture from his eyes.

"You're gay." He said out of breath.

"Get out of my house Hargrove" Lyssa sneered.

"It all makes sense now." He ignored her.

"I'll call the police." She threatened.

"You're gay" He said again.

"GET OUT" she screamed.

"I'm going. I'm going" Billy waved her off heading for the door. He opened the door, But before leaving he turned to face her. "I'll see you tomorrow." He stuck out his tongue biting it flat as he smiled at her.

Lyssa slammed the door in his face. she turned the lock and spun around to lean against it. Slowly she slid down the door and

crumbled to the floor. Hearing the camero's engine come to life and die down in the distance, Lyssa finally allowed herself to ball up and cry. She wailed until her throat was sore. Her head jerked back up and she sprang to her threw the door open and sprinted over the lawn to Steve's house. Lyssa banged frantically on the door calling out his name.

"What?!" When Steve opened the door he took in the sight of Lyssa. Her cheeks were wet and her eyes were puffy and bloodshot. "what's wrong?"

"I need you to drive me somewhere."

Before Steve could ask any questions she was heading to the car. Steve frantically grabbed his keys and jacket to follow. She gave him direction as they went down the road.

"Are you okay?" Steve asked as the car pulled into a neighborhood. But Lyssa kept silent as she stared out the window. "Lyssa?" Her name registered as she looked at him "What happened?"

"Here" Lyssa pointed at a house. "Stop here"

Before Steve could put the car in park Lyssa was out the door. Steve jumped out the car and called for her.

"Follow me" Lyssa called back without stopping.

A they headed into the house and down the basement Steve could hear the loud music.

"Hey Lyssa" Kim jumped up to greet her friend.

"What's he doing here?" Nick came up behind Kim directing the question at Steve.

Lyssa walked between the two and turned the stereo down. Without the music Daniel and Ken stopped jumping out jamming with their guitars.

When she had everyones attention she spoke. "He knows."

"Knows what" Ken pulled the guitar strap off his shoulder.

"He knows I'm attracted to women." Lyssa clarified.

Daniel was in Steve faster than anyone could blink He gathered Steve's shirt in his fists and flung him to the wall pinning him there. "And what does he think he's gonna do about it?" Daniel demanded more than asked.

"Daniel stop!" Lyssa grabbed his shoulder. But he only shook off her protest as he shook banged Steve against the wall again.

"Relax man" Ken wrapped his arms around Daniel's shoulder and waist swinging him around and pushed him to the middle of the room. He blocked again as Daniel tried to charge. "He already knew." Ken's admission stopped Daniel in his tracks. "He knew back when we were all friends."

Steve stepped away from the wall and straightened his shirt. Lyssa took a seat in the middle of the couch and covered her eyes with her hands. Kim and Nick Joined her on both sides. The each wrapped an arm around her in comfort.

"Hargrove knows" She said into her hands.

"What?" Ken questioned.

"How?" Steve sounded worried.

"He saw this girl leaving my house." She explained. "He must have seen me with her and put two and two together." The tears started again.

"Okay. Hargrove knows. Now what?" Ken looked around the room for answers.

"Harrington" Daniel snapped his fingers at Steve. "You're friends with that douche."

"We are not friends." Steve snapped back.

"You run in the same circle." Daniel corrected. "What will he do?"

"Well... umm" Steve tried to think. "he will probably tell the others. He might have already told them."

"Shit" Daniel paced the room.

"Everyone in town will know in less than two days." Ken sat on the arm of the couch staring at nothing.

"What do we do?" Nick asked.

"We Kill him" Kim answered. "Lets say he hasn't told anyone yet. We find him and get rid of him. We can throw him in the quarry."

"Nobody would miss him." Ken shrugged in agreement.

"You guys can't kill him." Steve jumped in as the voice of reason.

"Is king Steve gonna rat us out?" Kim hissed.

"No-I-But you can't just go around murdering people."

Daniel had been pacing the entire time. He finally stopped when an idea hit him. He walked over to Lyssa and crouched down to her level. "What if we leave?"

"What?" Lyssa dropped her hands into her lap.

"You, me and Kim. What if we get in the car right now and drive away?" He asked in sincerely. "You planned on leaving right after graduation. What's a couple of months early?"

"But We would be high school drop outs." Lyssa pointed out.

"So what?" Kim squeezed her.

"We can just get on the road and go, without a care in the world." Daniel smiled.

That genuine smile made Lyssa's heart ache. She knew if she agreed there would be no hesitation for Daniel or Kim. He was being completely genuine.

"This is crazy." Steve broke the moment. "You can't run away."

"Oh yeah pretty boy." Daniel stood up and shoved Steve out of their little circle. "I don't see you coming up with any ideas."

Steve looked over at Lyssa. Even surrounded by friends she looked so lost and alone. Steve blurted the first thing that came to mind.

"She can be my girlfriend." The group looked at him. Kim even made a grossed out face. "She can pretend to be my girlfriend." Steve corrected. "If people think that we are a couple then Hargrove story goes out the window. Hargrove hates me. People would just think he's making shit up to get to me."

"That could work." Ken commented. "It's a pretty flawless plan."

"Why can't it be one of us?" Daniel interjected. "She could date Ken or Nick."

"It doesn't work because we are nobodies." Ken explained. "She dates one of us and the gossip will still spread. She dates Harrington and Hargrove looks like a jealous loser."

"Yeah yeah yeah" Daniel admits defeat.

"I'll give her rides to and from school. She will have to hang out with my friends and go to a few parties if we want to make this believable. We could keep it up for the whole school year if needed."

"So we lose her for the rest of the school year?" Kim squeezed tighter.

"It's all for the best." Nick hugged Lyssa from the other side, trying to convince himself. "At least she would be safe."

"Alright" Steve clapped. "So we all agree?"

A meek no came from the couch. Everyone turned their heads to Lyssa. They weren't even sure she had actually said anything. ""

"Lyssa" Ken used a soft tone.

"I said no." Lyssa raised her head. "I won't hurt him. I won't run away. I won't waste my last year cowering in fear"

"But what happens when he starts talking around school?" Kim objected. "What if your parents find out?"

"I don't know." Lyssa shrugged off her friends as she stood up to get some space. "There is no win win scenario."

"Then we go with my plan." Steve interjected.

"And spend the rest of the school year on edge and miserable?" Lyssa shook her head. "No. What if we make that plan B?"

"But we still don't have a plan A." Ken pointed out.

"Plan A is that we go to school tomorrow. We go on with our lives one day at a time."

Lyssa suddenly felt exhausted as she flopped in a chair away from the others. There was nothing left to do. But the tension in the room would not disappear. Nick was the first to move. He grabbed a beer from the cooler and walked over to Lyssa. He ran the wet can down her arm. Lyssa shivered at the sensation and grabbed the can. But Nick didn't release his hold. She looked up at him.

"One bear at a time." Nick gave her a goofy smile before releasing the can.

"Cheers to that." Daniel shouted as he dug into the cooler. He chucked a beer at Kim and Ken. Even Steve was thrown a beer in his direction, an olive branch of sorts. Daniel cranked the music and the basement erupted in laughter.

A few hours, a few beers, and a couple of joints later Lyssa had a very calming buzz going on.

"Nope. Nu-uh. No Way." Nick laughed. "You did not come into my house, drink my beer-"

"Uhhh" Ken raised his hand pointing at his head. "I bought the beer."

Nick ignored him as he continued. "and say that Rush isn't the best band in the world."

Steve sat on the arm of Lyssa's chair as the group laughed at Nick's passion.

"I just-" Steve tried to defend himself.

"Cut the guy some slack" Daniel jumped in. "He probably listens to Flock of Seagulls or some shit like that."

Everyone, including Steve, laughed.

Lyssa rolled the last sip of beer in the bottom of the can. She knew they would have to go home soon. Steve chugged the rest of his drink and looked at her expectantly. Lyssa finished the rest of her drink.

"Well boys" Steve stood and stretched. Kim cleared her throat. "and lady" He quickly added. "We should probably be heading home." A choir of boos and a few cans were thrown in his direction. "hey hey hey" Steve blocked in good fun. "cut it out."

Lyssa got out of her seat and made the rounds of hugs and kisses good-bye. She used Steve as support as they walked to hims car. He helped her in and buckled her up. As he drove down the road Lyssa noted a difference in him. He seemed more at ease, happier.

Steve turned the volume up and the music blared. "Dun...Dun. Dun. Dun...Dun. Dun. Dun...Duuuunnnn" Steve banged his head as he sang into an imaginary microphone. "Rising up, back on the street. Did my time, took my chances."

Lyssa covered her mouth as she laughed at the display. She had missed this with Steve. She had missed his energy and positivity. With all the shit that came with Hargrove, She wouldn't change a damn thing if it meant loosing this very moment in Steve's car. Lyssa leaned over the center console and pulled Steve's fist to her mouth. She was going to turn this act into a duet.

"It's the eye of the tiger, It's the thrill of the fight." They both sang at the top of their lungs. "Rising up to the challenge of our rivals."

They sang the rest of the ride home. When they parked in Steve's drive way Steve helps Lyssa out of the car. He wrapped his arm around her waist and led her down the path. Lyssa gave him a quick

side hug to break away and walk home.

"I told your parents you were spending the night." Steve redirected her to his house. "I didn't want them to wonder where you were. When I went to the bathroom I called your house and told them we were studying late and i you could spend the night."

"They actually agreed to that?" She thought out loud.

"It's not like we haven't done it before." Steve shrugged.

"When we like ten." She countered.

They went straight to Steve's room.

"Where are your parents?" She whispered.

"Out of town." Steve grabbed a blanket and pillow out of the closet. "I figured I will take the floor and you can have the bed."

"The bed is big enough for the both of us." Lyssa lifted her shirt over her head.

"What?" He gave her an awkward look.

Lyssa pulled her pants down and stepped out of them, leaving her in her bra and panties. "It's not like we haven't done it before."

She jumped into bed and covered herself with the blanket. Steve rolled his eyes and followed her lead, taking everything off but his underwear before sliding under the blanket. The two laid on their sides and stared at each other in silence before Steve closed his eyes.

"Steve?"

"Yeah" Steve cracked an eye open.

"Thanks for everything"

"Well Billy has been on my ass since he got here." Steve opened both eyes to look at Lyssa. "I know what it's like to be the center of his attention."

"It's not just that" Lyssa elaborated. "You...you were the first person I told when I first started having those weird feelings. You didn't judge me. You didn't abandon me. You wanted to help me through it." There was a long pause before she continued. "I don't regret it, by the way. I don't regret having sex with you."

"Awww man" Steve rolled onto his back and smiled at the ceiling. "We were so immature to think that was the answer."

Lyssa scooted closer resting her head on his chest. "But it did clear some things up."

"They always say the first time is the worst." Steve joked.

"It wasn't that bad." Lyssa slapped his chest playfully. "I enjoyed most of it."

"Me too." Steve kissed the top of her head as he hugged her closer. "Remember the condom incident?"

Both erupted in laughter.

"You couldn't get the damn thing on." Lyssa laughed. "How many did you go through?"

"Like three"

The laughter subsided as the two relaxed.

"Steve?" Lyssa yawned his name.

"Yeah"

"I love you."

"I love you too."

Both drifted off to sleep.